



A Message From The Secretary

It's difficult to think about winter when temperatures in Kansas continue to sneak close to 100, but that's just what many of our staff has been doing as they prepare for the potential of pandemic flu. Recent news in other countries continues to indicate a strain of Avian flu not yet contagious in

humans may eventually become so, and could lead to a pandemic since a vaccine has not yet been developed to control it. It has been many years since a strain of flu that is not in the vaccine has swept the world. Many remember the stories of the 1918 flu and the devastation it caused. Health experts around the world are working on plans to prevent the rapid spread of influenza that occurs in a pandemic.

KDHE staff is finalizing its plan to address the issue which includes a significant public education effort to encourage Kansans to protect themselves from influenza by taking proactive measures: washing hands, covering the mouth when coughing, staying home when sick, getting plenty of rest and drinking plenty of fluids. These simple actions can prevent many cases of flu annually.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is watching closely to determine whether adequate flu vaccine will be available this fall. At this point it appears the two manufacturing companies producing vaccine for the U.S. are on schedule. CDC is reviewing recommendations on who should get the first available supplies of vaccine and will provide that information closer to the beginning of flu season in October. Meanwhile, KDHE is assisting health departments around the state with orders from available suppliers.

August is an exciting month for immunizations at KDHE as we are launching a statewide database called an immunization registry, which will allow physicians and other health care providers to access immunization records for children in a centralized system. The registry is expected to assist with increasing statewide immunization rates because parents will have a way of accessing their child's health record despite relocating or perhaps losing their child's immunization schedule.

Kansas immunization rates are going up. New data from the National Immunization Survey (NIS) shows immunization rates have improved for the third consecutive year. Immunization rates for 2004 for the 4:3:1 series (four doses of DTaP - Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis; three doses of polio vaccine; and one dose of measles-mumps-rubella vaccine) have increased to 80.6 percent, up from 78.1 percent in 2003, and up from 74 percent in 2002. This is a nearly 9 percent increase in rates and resulted in approximately 5,700 more children being immunized in Kansas in 2004 than in 2002 for the 4:3:1 series.

Many of you may have seen some new promotional materials encouraging recycling in Kansas which is a part of our 'Get Caught Recycling' campaign. The effort will launch this fall around the state and includes famous Kansans who are caught recycling.

Governor Sebelius, Bill Kurtis, KU basketball star Wayne Simien, K-State basketball star Kendra Wecker, and former Governor Mike Hayden are just a few of the big names appearing in this exciting effort to encourage Kansans to take simple steps to protect and preserve our beautiful state.

Later this month in Wichita, during the 2005 Kansas Environment Conference, Kansans will have an opportunity to learn about the 'state of the environment.' EPA Region VII Administrator Jim Gulliford and KDHE Environment Director Ron Hammerschmidt will hold a public meeting to seek input from Kansans during the conference at the Hyatt Regency on Aug. 25.

It is once again time to prepare for the annual Kansas State Fair called 'It's A Wild Ride, Baby!' from Sept. 9 – 18 in Hutchinson. KDHE staff will host a booth again this year with many agency promotional and educational materials. We look forward to seeing you there!

Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ron' or 'Jim', written in a cursive style.